

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 12457

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO SENATOR MCGOVERN'S OFFICE

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM UR US

SUBJECT: GROMYKO ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS, SALT

1. SUMMARY. DURING CORDIAL TWO-HOUR MEETING AT THE MFA AUGUST 26, SENATOR MCGOVERN, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR TOON, AND FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO DISCUSSED GENERAL STATE OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS, DISARMAMENT AND MIDDLE EAST. THIS CABLE HIGHLIGHTS THE DISCUSSION OF THE FIRST TWO TOPICS; MIDDLE EAST DISCUSSION REPORTED SEPTEL. ON CURRENT STATE OF RELATIONS, GROMYKO AGREED WITH SENATOR THAT PRESIDENT'S CHARLESTON SPEECH AND BREZHNEV'S REMARKS ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS IN TOAST TO TITO WERE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS. GROMYKO FOLLOWED BREZHNEV LINE IN ADDING THAT TASK WAS NOW TO TRANSLATE THESE STATEMENTS INTO LANGUAGE OF PRACTICAL POLITICS. THIS LED TO DISCUSSION OF CURRENT SALT NEGOTIATIONS, WITH GROMYKO REPEATING MANY OF THE POINTS MADE IN HIS MARCH 31 PRESS CONFERENCE AND INSISTING THAT NO AGREEMENT WOULD BE POSSIBLE ON THE BASIS OF THE CURRENT US POSITION. GROMYKO STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE "ORGANIC BALANCE" REACHED AT VLADIVOSTOK AS WELL AS THE IMPORTANCE OF CLOSING ALL "CHANNELS" FEEDING THE ARMS RACE. IN THIS REGARD, HE STRESSED THAT THE TWO SIDES HAD NOT FOUND

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COMMON LANGUAGE, WERE STILL FAR APART, AND THAT CRUISE MISSILES POSED THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO AGREEMENT. AS FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OF SALT, GROMYKO INDICATED THE KEY ELEMENT WOULD BE THE "POLITICAL BAGGAGE" THAT SECRETARY VANCE BROUGHT TO VIENNA NEXT MONTH. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL STATE OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS. AT GROMYKO'S INVITATION,

SENATOR MCGOVERN LED OFF SUBSTANTIVE PART OF THE TWO-HOUR DISCUSSION BY SAYING HE HAD LONG FELT THAT US-SOVIET RELATIONS WERE CENTRAL IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THUS WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT SECRETARY VANCE'S MARCH VISIT HAD NOT PRODUCED MORE POSITIVE RESULTS. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, IN PARTICULAR, THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH IN CHARLESTON AND BREZHNEV'S POSITIVE REMARKS DURING THE TITO, VISIT, SEEMED ENCOURAGING, HOWEVER. IT NOW SEEMED THAT BOTH SIDES WERE DISPOSED TO MOVE TOWARDS A REASONABLE FORMULA ON ARMS CONTROL.

3. IN RESPONSE, GROMYKO SAID HE FULLY AGREED WITH THE SENATOR REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS. AS THE SENATOR HAD REMARKED, AND AS PRESIDENT CARTER AND OTHERS IN THE US HAD ALSO NOTED, BREZHNEV DID SAY THAT THE PRESIDENT'S THOUGHT (IN HIS CHARLESTON SPEECH) ABOUT THE NEED TO FIND COMMON LANGUAGE WITH THE SOVIET UNION COINCIDED WITH THE POSITION OF THE USSR. INDEED, BREZHNEV AND OTHER SOVIET LEADERS HAD OFTEN MADE THIS POINT. THE TASK NOW WAS TO TRANSLATE THIS POSITION OF PRINCIPLE INTO THE LANGUAGE OF PRACTICAL POLITICS, IN PARTICULAR WITH RESPECT TO QUESTIONS CURRENTLY UNDER BILATERAL NEGOTIATION.

4. SALT NEGOTIATIONS. THE SENATOR INDICATED THAT SALT WAS OBVIOUSLY THE MOST IMPORTANT TOPIC UNDER DISCUSSION. HE SAID THAT AS A SENATOR, HE FELT CERTAIN THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WISHED TO GO BEYOND THE VLADIVOSTOK AGREEMENT, WITH ITS HIGH CONFIDENTIAL

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CEILINGS, AND WORK TOWARD SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTIONS, AND THE SENATOR PERSONALLY FELT THIS WAS NOT UNREASONABLE. PERHAPS THE INITIAL CARTER ADMINISTRATION PROPOSALS WERE NOT PRESENTED IN AN IDEAL FASHION, BUT THE SUBSTANCE OF THOSE PROPOSALS SEEMED REASONABLE, AND THE SENATOR WAS, THEREFORE, PUZZLED OVER THE SUDDEN SOVIET REJECTION OF THEM. SPECIFICALLY, THE US SUGGESTION FOR LOWER CEILINGS ON MIRV'S, WHERE WE HAVE AN ADVANTAGE, SEEMED IN THE SOVIET INTEREST.

5. THE SALT TALKS CERTAINLY WERE VITAL, COMMENTED GROMYKO, BUT "ARE FAR FROM CONCLUDED." CEILINGS AND NUMBERS WERE NOT THE MAIN ISSUE: THE MAIN ISSUE WAS THE CLOSING OF ALL IMPORTANT CHANNELS CONTRIBUTING TO THE ARMS RACE. "LET ME BE FRANK," HE SAID, "HERE WE HAVE FOUND NO COMMON LANGUAGE AND ARE STILL FAR APART." THE IDEA THAT THE LOWER THE CEILINGS, THE BETTER" WAS INCORRECT; THE VLADIVOSTOK CEILINGS WERE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CAREFUL BALANCE ACHIEVED AT VLADIVOSTOK, AS WE HAVE MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO THE US SIDE IN OUR RECENT NEGOTIATIONS.

6. AFTER LONG AND INTENSE DISCUSSIONS, GROMYKO CONTINUED, WE AGREED AT VLADIVOSTOK ON A BALANCED, PROPER COMBINATION OF

POSITIONS EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH SIDES.
THEN THE SOVIET SIDE SUDDENLY HEARD THAT THE VLADIVOSTOK
AGREEMENT WAS NO LONGER CONSIDERED BINDING. THE USSR, WHICH AFTER ALL
NEGOTIATED IN GOOD FAITH WITH OFFICAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE USG
AT VLADIVOSTOK, COULD NOT ACCEPT THIS POSITION. THIS POSITION
"HAS CAUSED THE SITUTATIO TO DETERIOATE,
TO BECOME MORE COMPLICATED. THIS IS OUR ASSESSMENT, AND IF
YOU ASK HOW WE EVALUATE THE PROSPECTS, I WOULD SHRUG AND SAY
I DON'T KNOW, THAT IT NOW DEPENDS UPON THE POLITICAL BAGGAGE
THAT THE US SIDE BRINGS TO OUR FORTHCOMING MEETING IN VIENNA.
IF IT IS THE SAME BAGGAGE AS BROUGHT TO MOSCOW AND TO GENEVA,
THERE WILL BE NO NEW AGREEMENT." THIS, HE SAID, HE WISHED
TO MAKE CLEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR.
THE MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK, SAID GROMYKO, IS THE ISSUE OF CRUISE
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MISSILES, AS "NEW CHANNEL" OF THE ARMS RACE ABOUT WHICH WE HAVE
REACHED "NO AGREEMENT WHATSOEVER." PERHAPS, THESE DIFFICULTIES
PLEASED "CERTAIN US INTERESTS" WHICH STOOD TO PROFIT FROM THE
ARMS RACE, BUT THE COMMON PERSON IN BOTH COUNTRIES WOULD PAY
THE REAL PRICE.

7. SENATOR MCGOVERN SAID HE MUST COMMENT THAT THE NOTION OF
CERTAIN INTERESTS IN THE US ARGUING AGAINST ANY SUCCESS IN LIMITING
THE ARMS RACE WAS MISTAKEN. PRESIDENT CARTER AND
SECRETARY VANCE WERE TOTALLY COMMITTED TO THE SUCCESS
OF SALT. WHILE HE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR THE ADMINISTRATION, THE
SENATOR THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT, IN PUTTING FORTH NEW ARMS
PROPOSALS, WAS PERHAPS TRYING TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME SINCE
THE VLADIVOSTOK MEETING. AS THE SENATOR UNDERSTOOD, CRUISE
MISSILES AND OTHER MATTERS WERE NOT AGREED AT VLADIVOSTOK, AND
IN SUGGESTING A SOMEWHAT NEW APPROACH THE ADMINISTRATION WAS
HOPING TO ACCELERATE, NOT RETARD, MATTERS. CERTAINLY THIS
WAS NOT DONE UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE ARMS INDUSTRY.

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8. THE SENATOR CALLED GROMYKO'S ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WAS THE FIRST US PRESIDENT TO HALT SERIAL PRODUCTION OF THE B-1 BOMBER, THUS SUPPORTING THOSE IN THE US SENATE WHO HAD LONG ARGUED FOR REDUCED MILITARY EXPENDITURES. THE SENATOR FRANKLY HAD NOT ANTICIPATED THIS, AND FELT IT INDICATED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS DISPOSED TO TAKE A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE QUESTION OF MILITARY WEAPONS, INCLUDING THE CRUISE MISSILE.

9. AFTER REITERATING THE FAMILIAR SOVIET ARGUMENT THAT CRUISE MISSILES WERE IN FACT SUBSUMED UNDER THE VLADIVOSTOK CEILINGS, GROMYKO SAID THAT AFTER VLADIVOSTOK THE SOVIET SIDE NONETHELESS ATTEMPTED, UNFORTUNATELY WITHOUT RESULT, TO MAKE PROPOSALS ON DELIVERY SYSTEMS WHICH TOOK INTO CONSIDERATION THE NEW US POSITION. GROMYKO STRESSED THAT PRESENT US POSITION WAS INEQUITABLE, ONE-SIDED AND COULD NOT SERVE AS THE BASIS FOR AGREEMENT.

10. THE SENATOR SAID HE WISHED TO MAKE ONE FINAL COMMENT ON DISARMAMENT, A COMMENT HE HAD ALSO MADE TO US POLICY MAKERS IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT GIVEN THE OVERWHELMING DESTRUCTIVE POWER POSSESSED BY OUR TWO COUNTRIES, THE QUESTION OF EXACT PARITY HAS LOST PRACTICAL MEANING. WHY, THEN, WAS IT SO DIFFICULT FOR POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERS IN BOTH COUNTRIES TO COME
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TO AGREEMENT?

11. THERE WAS VALIDITY IN THIS QUESTION, GROMYKO RESPONDED. BUT BOTH SIDES HAD AGREED TO ATTEMPT TO LIMIT ARMS, AND SURELY THIS WAS CORRECT. MORE ARMS WOULD MEAN GREATER RISK OF CONFLICT, AND WE COULD NOT BE SATISFIED WITH CURRENT LEVELS. THE SENATOR SAID HE DID NOT MEAN TO DIMINISH THE IMPORTANCE OF ARMS TALKS, BUT SIMPLY FELT AS A LAYMAN THAT THE ABILITY OF EACH SIDE TO DESTROY THE OTHER MANY TIMES OVER SHOULD MAKE RESOLUTION OF SPECIFIC ISSUES EASIER THAN IT SEEMED TO BE. GROMYKO INDICATED THAT THIS FACT MIGHT BE A PRECONDITION FOR SUCCESSFUL TALKS, BUT DID NOT OBVIATE THE DIFFICULTY OF REACHING AGREEMENT ON SPECIFIC ISSUES. AS FOR THE SOVIET SIDE: "THE ENTIRE SOVIET LEADERSHIP AND GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV PERSONALLY WANT AN AGREEMENT, AND I SAY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR THAT THIS WOULD HAVE TREMENDOUS SIGNIFICANCE NOT JUST FOR OUR TWO COUNTRIES BUT FOR THE WORLD AS A WHOLE."

12. THE SENATOR EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT THE VIENNA TALKS WOULD GO WELL, NOTING THAT BOTH SIDES WOULD HAVE TO BRING THE PROPER POLITICAL LUGGAGE. HE CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO THE MIDDLE EAST, REPORTED SEPTEL.

14. ATMOSPHERICS. IN ADDITION TO AMBASSADOR, SENATOR WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS TWO AIDES AND BY FIRST SECRETARY COMBS. GROMYKO, ACCOMPANIED BY DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KORNIYENKO AND INTERPRETER SUKHODREV, SEEMED IN TOP FORM. HE SPOKE COGENTLY AND WITHOUT NOTES THROUGHOUT THE TWO-HOUR MEETING, INTERSPERSING HIS REMARKS WITH DRAMATIC GESTURES, QUIPS AND NUMEROUS CRITICISMS OF SUKHODREV'S INTERPRETING (EXAMPLE: WHEN SUKHODREV USED THE TERM "BANQUET" TO DESCRIBE A MEAL HOSTED BY BREZHNEV, GROMYKO STERNLY INTERJECTED THAT COMMUNISTS GIVE DINNERS, NOT BANQUETS). GROMYKO'S
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PHYSICAL APPEARANCE WAS EXCELLENT. HE USED SUKHADREV FOR INTERPRETING RUSSIAN TO ENGLISH, BUT NOT FROM ENGLISH TO RUSSIAN.

15. THIS CABLE HAS BEEN CLEARED BY SENATOR MCGOVERN.

16. DEPARTMENT REPEAT AS DESIRED.
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Message Attributes

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